

**Testimony of Lori Morrison, Director of Administrative Services
Baxter State Park**

**Before the Joint Standing Committees on
Appropriations and Financial Affairs
and Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry**

**LD 2214 “An Act To Make Supplemental Appropriations and Allocations from the
General Fund and Other Funds for the Expenditures of State Government and Changing
Certain Provisions of the Law Necessary to the Proper Operations of State
Government for the Fiscal Years Ending June 30, 2024, and June 30, 2025”**

Hearing Date: March 4, 2024

Good afternoon Senators Rotundo and Ingwersen, Representatives Sachs and Pluecker, and Members of the Joint Standing Committees on Appropriations and Financial Affairs and Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry. My name is Lori Morrison, I am the Director of Administrative Services for Baxter State Park. Please accept my written testimony in support of LD 2214, the Governor’s Supplemental Budget proposal for State fiscal years 2024 and 2025. This testimony addresses one initiative which can be found on page A-26.

Baxter State Park is a 209,644-acre forested wilderness park established by former Governor Percival Baxter.¹ The Park was created through 28 gifts of land given by the Governor, which were accepted by acts of the legislature and included in the Private and Special Laws of the State of Maine to collectively form what we know today as Baxter State Park. Governor Baxter’s intent was to prioritize the protection of natural resources over recreational opportunities, ensuring that the landscape remains in a "Forever Wild" condition. Uniquely, Baxter State Park is also a charitable trust. As a trustee, the State must hold Baxter State Park in perpetuity for the benefit of the people of Maine.²

Baxter State Park is administered by a three-member board - the Baxter State Park Authority. The Authority consists of the state’s principal officers in the professions of law, forestry, and fish and wildlife management, specifically the Maine Attorney General, the Director of the Maine Forest Service in the Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry, and the Commissioner of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife³

Governor Baxter intended for the Park to remain financially independent through a trust created in 1927 and upon his death, he donated a large portion of his estate, which grew into an endowment capable of funding one-half to two-thirds of our annual operating budget. The entire budget for Baxter State Park comes from Other Special Revenue Funds, using no General Fund dollars.

¹12 M.R.S. § 900; <https://baxterstatepark.org>.

² Whitcomb, Howard R. and Friends of Baxter State Park, "Percival P. Baxter's Vision for Baxter State Park: An Annotated Compilation of Original Sources in Four Volumes. Vol 1" (2005). Governor Percival Proctor Baxter Documents. Part 1, Pages 1-13. http://digitalmaine.com/baxter_docs/3

³12 M.R.S. § 901.

The Park's primary source of revenue is the trust Governor Baxter established. Other sources of revenue for the Park include visitor fees, other charitable donations, and revenue from sustainable forest management in the Scientific Forest Management Area in the northwest corner of the Park. Therefore, approving the Park's proposed initiative would have no fiscal impact on the General Fund.

The proposed initiative in this budget aims to improve the current resources of Baxter State Park, while ensuring that the "Forever Wild" landscape is preserved according to Governor Baxter's wishes, as the donor of this trust.

There is one initiative for the Baxter State Park Authority, which can be found on page A-26. This initiative continues and makes permanent one Management Analyst II position created by Financial Order 03216 F4. It also eliminates one vacant Office Associate II position and utilizes the headcount and funding from the vacant position.

This concludes my testimony on our 2024-2025 supplemental budget. If you receive any questions, I am happy to answer them.